

Curtis Road Interchange Area Master Plan Update

Neighborhood Meeting - December 7, 2015

Input Summary

Over 100 participants provided input on concerns and opportunities for the Curtis Road Interchange Area. Planning and Development Department staff will use this information in updating the Curtis Road Interchange Area Master Plan. Participants are very well-informed and provided both general and very specific ideas about development in the Curtis Road Interchange Area. What some participants saw as a concern, others saw as an opportunity. The following summary is organized by topics.

Traffic, Transportation and Access: Increased traffic on arterial streets like Curtis, Windsor, Duncan and Staley is a concern shared by many participants. Widening Windsor Road to relieve congestion is suggested. Also, neighborhood cut-through traffic is a major concern for residents within the Robeson Meadows West (RMW) neighborhood. Many residents strongly oppose connecting streets into new development south of RMW. Some participants think the street should connect to similar single family development, but only if streets are designed to prevent cut-through traffic and do not directly connect to any multi-family or commercial areas. In keeping with City requirements, a street stub off of Sandhill Lane was built for the purpose of connecting to future residential development when RMW was completed. Many residents suggest that this street stub could be an opportunity to connect existing bike and pedestrian trails to new trails and create a way for emergency responders to access the neighborhood, without connecting auto traffic. Suggestions also included providing bicycle facilities, including bike lanes, in any new development.

Participants believe traffic studies should be conducted to make sure new road layouts do not lead to traffic congestion like the congestion on North Prospect. Participants would prefer that staff determines the road layout and does not rely on developers to get it right. There is concern about the limited access points into each quadrant off of Curtis Road. Residents are aware that this is controlled by the Illinois Department of Transportation, but are concerned about traffic 'bottlenecks' at the two north/south access points. Some participants believe this area provides an opportunity to try roundabouts or traffic circles within the development.

Buffers, Trails and Open Space: Participants are very interested in seeing a trail network built in new development. Trails should connect to existing networks and surrounding neighborhoods. Participants see value in trails as a way to get from place to place in addition to recreation. This is seen as one way to maintain the character established by surrounding neighborhoods and encourage an active lifestyle for new and existing residents. The current Master Plan calls for landscaped buffers with a trail along Duncan Road and between established neighborhoods and new commercial development. Residents would like to see a landscaped buffer between their neighborhoods and any new development, including new, similar residential development. Widening this buffer into a public park is also suggested.

Participants also value gathering spaces and parks for socializing, relaxation and recreation. Including well designed outdoor spaces for these purposes is very important to participants. Additional playgrounds are desired, with residents reporting that the available playground space in the area is limited as compared to the number of families in the area. Playing fields are also desired. Packaging trails, outdoor gathering spaces, parks and stormwater features or 'lakes' into attractive features of new development is seen as an opportunity. These spaces should be integrated into all new development in this area.

Land Uses, Location and Type of Development: A major concern is location and type of development. While some participants strongly oppose gas stations, hotels and fast food restaurants, other participants welcome those businesses if they meet the following conditions: appropriate location, high quality building materials, plentiful landscaping, good site design, attractive signage and dark-sky compliant lighting. While a nice, well-managed gas station is considered an opportunity, a truck stop or very large gas station is adamantly opposed, regardless of design conditions. Participants are very interested in regulations that limit businesses like adult uses, gambling parlors, payday lending and liquor stores here. Higher end hotels are preferred. Participants want businesses that cater to interstate travelers, including gas stations, hotels and fast food restaurants, to be located nearer to I-57 and Curtis Road. Those businesses should be located in the quarter of each quadrant framed by I-57, Curtis Road and the designated north/south intersection with Curtis Road, or towards the center of the overall study area. Industrial development should be prohibited in the study area.

If development is well designed and located, there is much support for having restaurants, grocery and convenience retail businesses locate here. Suggestions include fast casual dining, healthy restaurants, a traditional pub, coffee shops and upscale dining options. Participants also desire a 'fresh foods' grocery store along the lines of Trader Joe's or Whole Foods. If properly designed, large, destination type retailers like Bass Pro and Costco are also considered an opportunity by some participants. Some participants see 24-hour pharmacies as an opportunity, while others do not wish to have 24-hour pharmacies in the area. There is overwhelming support for regulations that ensure this area becomes an attractive destination that is a place to socialize with friends and family. It should be better designed and higher-end than North Prospect/North Neil.

There is overwhelming support for increasing the amount of residential development identified on the Future Land Use Map. Residents prefer single family residential development of a similar price and style to be located south of RMW. There is also desire for nice condominiums, similar to those in the northeast corner of RMW, to be included in the residential areas. Participants are thinking about future housing choices for themselves and choices for aging parents, too. Mid-priced, one level homes and ranch style duplexes are appealing to seniors and those thinking about downsizing but want to stay in their neighborhood. A retirement community is seen as an opportunity.

Multi-family development has a more mixed reaction. Concerns about multi-family housing include developments that are too large and generate excessive traffic, buildings that are too tall, and a

transient population. There is also concern about poor quality buildings, poor management over time and lower income residents that will negatively impact perception of the area and bring down property values. Participants cited Hunter's Pond as being too large, both in the size of buildings and the overall complex. Townhomes are an opportunity, if they are well designed. Some participants cited townhomes in Boulder Ridge and Sawgrass as being too narrow, unappealing, with driveways that are too shallow and too close together, resulting in parking problems. Additional overflow parking areas or alleys could correct this in future townhome development. Other participants noted that well designed, well-managed multi-family housing would be an asset.

Properly scaled medical facilities are considered an opportunity. A retirement community with a range of assistance levels is strongly supported and could complement those medical facilities.

Site Design and Environmental Protection: There is concern about the impact of development on the environment. Participants appreciate the views of sunsets, stars, farmland and wildlife that are provided by the study area. There is strong support for protecting these assets. Participants suggest outdoor light fixtures that are certified to be 'dark-sky compliant.' Signage, awnings and canopies should include dimmers that reduce brightness after a certain time of day. Buildings and signs should not be so tall that they block views. Residents of the area are very concerned about wind-blown litter. This is an existing problem at Interstate Drive and North Prospect Avenue. There is also concern about noise. Physical barriers, such as a noise wall along I-57, could be an opportunity if they do not block views. Including green building standards, such as solar energy, energy efficiency, etc. should be a requirement. Participants suggest that development in the study area provides an opportunity to test environmental protection regulations and then apply them citywide.

Stormwater runoff is another concern. Residents of RMW report that they have a stormwater management issue currently and are concerned that additional impervious surfaces in new development will make the problem worse. Participants want stormwater management features that are effective, but also attractive and provide recreation opportunities. They point to the West Washington Watershed improvements, Boneyard Second Street Reach and features from other communities as examples to follow. They also cited local detention basins in the North Prospect/North Neil shopping area as examples of 'what-not-to-do.' Participants are strongly opposed to stand alone detention basins that are not integrated into the overall site design and look like a 'hole in the ground.' Stormwater features should reduce the size of basins and they should be landscaped around the perimeter to prevent geese from landing here.

Participants believe the City's existing landscaping standards for businesses and employers with large parking lots are inadequate. Required landscaping is said to be 'cold' and does not make an impact. More landscaping, including trees and screening materials, is desired. More of the site should be devoted to landscaping and less of the site should be devoted to parking areas. Parking lots should be more attractive and should have designated walkways for pedestrians. Buildings should be placed so a person can park and comfortably walk to adjacent businesses, not feel like they have to drive to each

one. If parking areas are located behind a building, there should be a rear entryway to the business for patrons. Participants noted that Village at the Crossing has plenty of parking behind businesses, but because patrons must walk around to the front entrance, the rear parking is not convenient. Participants noted that new development should better design outdoor dining space and buffer it from parking.

Signage is a concern. Participants are strongly opposed to billboards in this location. They are also concerned about having too many signs, signs that are garish and signs that are too bright.

Piecemeal development is a concern, participants want the minimum overall development plan size to remain large. Participants are worried that the minimum acreage requirement for the Overall Development Plan will not prevent piecemeal development. If a small portion of multiple developments is built, it will still feel like piecemeal development and will not be interconnected.

Building Design: Participants believe the look and feel of buildings will greatly impact the desirability of development here. This is an opportunity to create a commercial and residential district that withstands the test of time. Participants want building design that is not trendy, but classic in style. Regulations should mandate that materials, especially on primary facades, should be a specific percentage of brick or stone. Inexpensive materials that do not weather well should be limited in use. This area should be special. Generic, strip-mall style appearance should be avoided. Participants are very concerned that development will be ugly. A unified, cohesive look to buildings, signage and site features is strongly preferred. There are many good examples in other communities that City staff should look at.

Other Input:

- Some participants believe that a portion of the commercial development here should be required to be more than one story, with office or residential uses on upper floors.
- Participants have interest in policies that impact existing homes and churches in the area currently on septic sewer. Some would like the opportunity to connect to sanitary sewer, while others are concerned about forced connection.
- Participants strongly favor keeping a neighborhood meeting requirement prior to the public hearing for the Overall Development Plan.
- There is strong interest in how new development here impacts property values in surrounding neighborhoods. While participants want property values to remain high, there is also concern that development could result in an increase in property taxes.
- Vandalism and theft from open garages and unlocked cars is an ongoing issue here. This is also an issue citywide. There is concern that new commercial and multi-family development will contribute to an increase in crime here.
- All new development here should be required to provide broadband internet.